

Real Stories of Young Entrepreneurs in Wisconsin

Name: Mackenzie Schmitt

School & Grade: 12th grade at Appleton Career Academy

Business Name: 2nd Look Photography

What inspired you to start your business? Tell us about your inspiration, your idea and how it became a reality.

The origins of my business start when I was in the eighth grade; this is when I began to develop an interest in photography. As part of a history class project I researched the WWII photographer Margaret Bourke-white. Books showing her photographs inspired me to take up photography as a hobby and I started saving for a camera of my own. Eventually I purchased my first Digital SLR camera and macro lens and began taking pictures. Initially I focused on landscapes and close-ups of nature scenes but then I found a photo-collage in a small home goods store that spell out words using pictures of everyday objects. This caused me to begin to see letter shapes in everyday objects. I created a few collages as gifts for friends and family and they were received with great enthusiasm. This was the beginning of my business.

Describe your product / service, purpose / goals, features / benefits, unique selling point.

The business I started is called Second Look Photography. It is a specialty photography business in which I design and sell unique collages that use pictures to spell out words. I personally take each photo in locations ranging from my backyard to states visited on family vacations. My photos are typically of everyday objects, architecture or nature scenes. The words I create are typically inspirational, such as "Love" or "Hope"; a family name such as "Smith" or "Jones"; or hobbies and interests such as "music" or "art". Something unique about my business is that with every customer I tell the story behind the photos. For example I'll explain where the picture was taken or what it is.

Tell us about yourself and how you make your business succeed.

2nd Look Photography is possible because I am creative, self motive, and passionate about what I do. I have created successful business with thousands of dollars in profit. But like any business there have been obstacles. For example I have created products that don't sell or picked the wrong venue. I have always taken those obstacles as a learning experience and grown from them.

What are your future goals and vision for your business? How do you propose to develop your business?

Will college starting in the fall of 2013 my time will be limited and my location will likely not allow me to attend craft fairs in my hometown; therefore, my plan for continuation of my business is to pursue sale of my pieces through online sales and local independent home decorating stores.